



# Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

## MONTANA WOLF PROGRAM WEEKLY REPORT

To: Interested Parties

From: FWP Wolf Program Coordinator, Carolyn Sime (406-461-0587)

Subject: Wolf Program Activities and Related Information, June 13 - June 19, 2009

Contributors to the Montana Wolf Weekly are Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), Universities, USDA Wildlife Services (WS), the National Park Service (NPS; Glacier NP; Yellowstone National Park will be reported in the Wyoming Wolf Weekly), US Forest Service, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and the Blackfeet Nation.

Highlighted activities relate to: monitoring, wolf – livestock interactions, outreach and education, research, law enforcement, and other miscellaneous topics of public interest. The Weekly Report will be available on each Monday, covering the previous week. It and other wolf program information (including the 2008 annual report) can be found at: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf/default.html>.

### **Wolf Monitoring Activities**

Field work has been ongoing to investigate wolf reports, trap, and determine whether packs have denned. A wet, rainy spring and early summer have slowed trapping efforts. Bradley has been working in the West Fork of the Bitterroot. Laudon / Boyd and volunteers have been working in Glacier National Park. They will next move to the Swan and north of Whitefish. Lance has been scouting in the Big Hole area and in the Pintler pack territory.

FWP Bear Specialist Erik Wenum and Biologist John Vore documented a 3 year old lactating female wolf in the Big Salmon Lake/South Fork of the Flathead area of the Bob Marshall Wilderness while trapping for female grizzly bears and conducting spring wildlife surveys. This female could be the alpha female of the Flathead Alps pack or a new pack.

UM Researcher Derbridge and FWP Biologist Jerry Brown confirmed reproduction in the Pulpit pack northwest of Libby. They located a den in a slash pile and saw pups.

Flights: Ross flew in southwest Montana on 6/15.

### **Wolf - Livestock Activities**

On 6/16, ID WS killed a member of the Sage Creek pack in Montana, as authorized by FWP. Back on 6/8, Idaho WS confirmed a sheep was killed on the U. S. Sheep Station near Humphrey, ID. The pack thought responsible is called Sage Creek and it is a border pack. MT FWP has given ID WS or MT WS staff authorization to work on either side of the state line. Lethal control is completed. FWP and IDFG are taking steps to improve coordination on border packs that are confirmed to have injured / killed livestock.

On 6/17, MT WS and CSKT removed NW190M, the remaining member of the Salish pack. Control is complete at this time.

On 6/17, WS confirmed a dead ewe and two injured ewes by a wolf / wolves near Martinsdale on private land. Recent sheep losses in this same area prompted FWP to authorize removal of 2 wolves previously. Control efforts are ongoing.

On 6/18, WS confirmed sheep losses (some died and some injured and expected to die) southeast of Dillon in the Sweetwater. The livestock owner reported seeing 3 wolves at the time (some black), but did not have an opportunity to haze / harass the wolves or kill a wolf during the attack. The wolf observation does not match up with FWP's current knowledge of pairs / packs in the area and WS did not hear a radio collars. So, FWP requested WS to try and place a collar. However, field conditions are muddy, travel is difficult, and trapping conditions are poor but expected to improve.

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No further reports or rumors of wolves or wolf hybrids have been received from Garfield County.

### **Outreach and Education Activities**

Nothing to report.

### **Research Activities**

On 6/12, IDFG placed GPS collars on two wolves in the Fish Creek Pack via helicopter darting. One was an adult female and the other was a yearling male. This is a border pack shared between Montana and Idaho, but is counted in the Idaho population based on the den location and that it spends a fair amount of time in Idaho. These collars are being placed to gather better data about wolf-elk relationships.

Jonathan Derbridge, a graduate student at the University of Montana is back in the field this summer. His work focuses on wolf hair analyses which can provide insight into wolf diets. Collections are focused on the Kootenai National Forest around Libby.

FWP crews (Laudon et al.) captured a 3 year old male wolf the Kintla Pack in the North Fork of the Flathead / west side of Glacier National Park. It was fitted with a GPS collar as a part of a research study on trophic cascades led by Christina Eisenberg from Oregon State University. FWP has been a cooperator in the project and assisting with trapping / collaring efforts.

### **Law Enforcement and Related Activities**

Nothing to report.

### **Other**

#### *NEW -- Delisting Litigation Formally Starts*

On June 2, a coalition of 13 groups, represented by the law firm EarthJustice, challenged the USFWS delisting decision in Federal District Court in Missoula (9<sup>th</sup> Circuit). The complaint alleges the USFWS delisting decision was an arbitrary and capricious violation of the federal Endangered Species

Act for a variety of reasons. A request for a preliminary injunction (which if granted by the Court, would keep federal ESA protections in place during the litigation) has not been filed at this time. The Greater Yellowstone has also filed a lawsuit challenging the federal delisting decision. The groups will be represented by their own attorney's, respectively, but the cases were consolidated. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks will seek to intervene in the Missoula Court on behalf of the State of Montana. Montana supports federal efforts to delist wolves.

Additionally, the State of Wyoming filed a lawsuit in the 10<sup>th</sup> Circuit (Cheyenne Wyoming) challenging USFWS's rejection of Wyoming's regulatory framework and state plan.

Background for Montana

On May 4, gray wolves in Montana were delisted. Conservation and management are guided by Montana laws, administrative rules (ARM 12.9.1301 – 12.9.1305), and the state's federally-approved plan. Wolves in Montana were automatically reclassified to a "species in need of management" statewide on May 4. The gray wolf is protected statewide, though individual wolves may be hazed, harassed, or killed if seen actively attacking, killing, or threatening to kill livestock. Incidents must be reported and each will be investigated. Wolves may also be killed to protect human life. See the FWP wolf web page for a Fact Sheet and answers to frequently asked questions about delisting. The FWP wolf web page also has information about state law and regulations and what livestock owners can do to protect livestock. See: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf/default.html>.

Montana 2009 Wolf Hunting Season: FWP and the FWP Commission continue efforts to develop and prepare for a potential 2009 season. The season structure previously adopted by the FWP Commission is still in place for a potential fall 2009 season. But FWP and the FWP Commission must still establish a quota (the total number of wolves that could be taken by hunters) for 2009. The public comment opportunity for establishing final 2009 wolf hunting quotas closed on June 19. FWP is reviewing public comment and related wolf population data. FWP expects to make a final quota recommendation for FWP Commission consideration and final action on July 8.

Montana Livestock Loss Reduction & Mitigation Board:

Nothing to report. The program coordinator can be reached at 444-5609.

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To learn more about Montana's wolf population, the Montana program and to help FWP monitor wolves by reporting wolf sign, visit FWP at: [www.fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf](http://www.fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf).

To anonymously report a dead or injured wolf or suspected illegal activity, call: 1-800-TIP-MONT.

To request an investigation of injured or dead livestock, call USDA Wildlife Services directly in western Montana / Helena area at 458-0106 or in eastern Montana at the statewide office: 657-6464. Or, call your nearest FWP representative to have your call referred to Wildlife Services.

If you have a confirmed or probable livestock loss due to wolves, USDA Wildlife Services will supply you with a copy of the Loss Reimbursement Application form. For more information, see <http://liv.mt.gov/liv/LM/index.asp>. Or, contact the Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program Coordinator George Edwards at the Montana Department of Livestock at 444-5609.